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Serge Michel Jacques Thibault, Laura Verdelli

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PLANNING PROCESS, BETWEEN EXPERT PROJECT AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

SERGE THIBAUT¹ LAURA VERDELLI²

Keywords: Project sciences, planning process, complexity

Abstract

The content of this paper concerns some recent evolutions of the planning process in France. Analyzing two study cases, we'll show that today, two types of process are coexisting and, in a way, confronting. The first one corresponds to the "classic" plan for which the project is the principal stage of a linear process. This linear plan is organized by two dominant actors, the contractor and the project manager. For the second, the project is not the main phase of a circular process which contains five main steps. This second emerging type questions the expert as the only authorized actor to establish the project. The project itself becomes second in regard to the definition of the term of the situation and the emergence of some "collectives of action" including all civil society. The described evolution is not yet the object of a precise knowledge which participates of the construction of project sciences. Our approach aims to contribute to project sciences.

Introduction

The content of this paper concerns some recent evolutions of the planning process in France. We will establish two major conceptions, one dating back to the moment of its formalization during the 1970s, the other one being contemporary. Our results come from cross checked data of numerous research projects developed by the CITERES *Centre Interdisciplinaire Cités, TERritoires, Environnement et Sociétés* laboratory. Planning process is enquired across different laboratory actions, even not being the central focus its constant presence in laboratory activities drove us a couple of years ago to design a transversal axis re-reading strategic planning under a different angle. Our approach aims to contribute to project sciences.

Generally speaking for the European countries the sixties are characterised by a strong economic growth. In France territorial development and planning depend from a central declared power. Since

¹ Urban and Regional planning department, Polytech'Tours, UMR 6173 CNRS CITERES, University of Tours - Département aménagement, Polytech'Tours, 35, allée Ferdinand de Lesseps, 37200 Tours, France - serge.thibault@univ-tours.fr

² Urban and Regional planning department, Polytech'Tours, UMR 6173 CNRS CITERES, University of Tours - Département aménagement, Polytech'Tours, 35, allée Ferdinand de Lesseps, 37200 Tours, France - laura.verdelli@univ-tours.fr

the beginning of the eighties, in a deepness changed social, cultural, economic, historic context, the central power has promote the creation of local and regional powers, influencing, at the same time, the planning project process and its expectations. Corresponding to a transition period, the present times face the cohabitation and the confrontation of two major way of “doing” the project.

The first one is a “classical” scheme where the project is often presented as the dominant step of a linear planning process, framed by a previous step defining the conditions and the major expectations and a subsequent one: the operational realisation. Within this way the expert, as a figure, dominates the process, being the only legitimate to conceive the project.

The second one, whose existence is our hypothesis, obliges to relocate the project within the planning process. In fact we will face a sort of circular process made of the combination of, at least, five equivalent phases:

1. Definition of project expectations by a collective of action
2. Project conception
3. Project realisation
4. Project appropriation by users
5. Subsequent space transformations

The project will be less the result than a framework of/for collective action.

An example of treatment

We will analyze two study cases: two different periods, two projects, two different national organizations (between centralized system and decentralization) almost the same space: le Loire valley (France).

The aims is to show that the planning process, that for the first project could be defined as to be constituted of a “linear” sequence of actions, must be considered today as a circular process which mobilizes no longer only experts but different “collectives of action” emerging from civil society.

Project	Planning system	Core points
The Garden Metropolis project (1968-1977)	Scheme of regional planning focusing essentially on the Loire valley between Tours and Orleans	Infrastructures and heritages considered as planning technologies for the national scheme of pressure reduction on the Parisian basin
Loire river as world heritage (2000-...)	A framework of actions	Natural and cultural heritages as technologies of management, governance and development

Since the development of national landplanning policies, during the second half of the twentieth century, the Loire basin and specifically the part around Orleans, Blois and Tours, has been object of some specific projects, all more or less characterised by the will to realize some operational structures able to control urban development and to double it with valorisation, management and conservation of natural, cultural and landscape heritages (one of the first richness of the region). The first, and probably the most ambitious and the more original, of these projects, identified by some innovations in terms of regional planning, but still unknown to the public, even planning professional, was the one called **Garden Metropolis**.

To understand some of the reasons that led to the conception of this project, as to its failure, we are briefly reminding some elements that contributed to the emergence of a voluntarist planning politic of French territory, first brought by the national state, then, after the decentralisation, by the negotiation among some local and intermediate institutional scales.

The landplanning policy that will be established since 1950 and that will lead in 1964 to the creation of the *Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale* (DATAR) aims in balancing a centralisation that didn't help the (economic) development capacity of regional scales. At the same time it aims to a better urban growth distribution, through the "creation" of a system made of: a. eight Parisian basin "balance" metropolis³, five equipped of a *Organisme d'Etude d'Aménagement de l'aire Métropolitaine* (OREAM) in charge of the elaboration of their new master plan; b. nine new towns⁴; c. the first four urban areas⁵; d. nine support towns of more than 100.000 inhabitants⁶.

With the approval, in 1967, of the *Loi d'Orientation Foncière*, defining the new framework for urban planning, the national government impulses the further creation of the regions, and, at the beginning of the eighties, the advent of the decentralization. « Le 9 avril 1968, le Groupe Interministériel d'Aménagement du Bassin Parisien (GIABP) prescrit l'élaboration d'un schéma d'aménagement à long terme de la vallée de la Loire Moyenne qui exprime deux vocations : zone d'appui du Bassin Parisien et section 'clé' du système constitué par le fleuve et ses affluents »⁷. The privileged situation of the Loire axis had not escape to the stakeholders carrying the file of landplanning, they detected in these space close to Ile-de-France, a possible location to reduce urban pressure on Paris city region.

The conception of the landplanning project is assign to the *Organisation d'Etudes d'Aménagement de la Loire Moyenne* (OREALM), created by state government in 1968. The multidisciplinary team of this organisation deliberately choose not to separate the different towns, linking each one directly to Paris, but to consider that they can constitute a real urban "system" that can be metropolised as a

³ Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing, Nancy-Metz-Thionville, Strasbourg, Lyon-Saint-Étienne-Grenoble, Marseille-Aix-en-Provence-Delta du Rhône, Toulouse, Bordeaux et Nantes-Saint-Nazaire

⁴ Marne la vallée, Cergy Pontoise, Saint Quentin en Yvelines, L'Ile d'Abeau, Villeneuve d'Ascq, Evry, Sénart, Val de Reuil, Etang de Berre

⁵ Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Strasbourg

⁶ They are divided in four groups : Caen, Orléans et Tours, Amiens et Rouen, Le Havre, Reims et Troyes

⁷ *Aménagement de la Loire moyenne – schéma de la Métropole jardin*, Schéma général d'aménagement de la France, Travaux et recherches de prospective - Aménagement du territoire, Paris, La documentation française, 1977, p. 3

whole, giving more importance to horizontal connections among peripheral components than to relations centre-periphery.

The project, last version approved in 1977, is based onto the evidence of the existence of a natural, geographical, cultural, historical, heritage axis highly structuring: the Loire river corridor. If the formalisation of such a metropolitan project had been organised by a series of planning documents, the progressive realisation of regional structures and of the premises of decentralisation had to affect its evolution and largely modify its original contents:

- July 1970, publication by OREALM of a project summary⁸;
- June 1971, presentation by OREALM of the diagnostic and basic reference for the conception of the project⁹;
- 5 July 1972, law establishing the regions as « établissement public à vocation spécialisée »;
- December 1973, the OREALM becomes OREAC (*Organisation d'Etudes d'Aménagement de la Région Centre*) enlarging the dimension of intervention to the whole Centre region;
- 1975 Approval of the master plan of the medium Loire, resized as to fit global regional interests;
- 1977 Publication of the book *Aménagement de la Loire moyenne – schéma de la Métropole jardin*, but the shift towards the regional urban network had already totally changed the specific goals of the project

Starting from this major inflection the garden metropolis project loose its first orientation and its latest document develops more a series of sectors schemes being less the reinforcement of each part in connection with the whole than the application of the initial project to some geographical subgroups.

To resume: elaborated since 1968 by OREALM, within the framework of the metropolis of balance of Parisian basin, it proposed to realise a real axis, linking nature and urbanisation along the Loire river corridor. Of innovative conception, based on the conservation of the existing territorial structures, valorising natural, cultural and urban environments, it was approved by national directive in 1975, but due to the time changes it was never applied.

⁸ "Eléments pour un livre blanc"

⁹ Livre Blanc "Vers la métropole jardin"

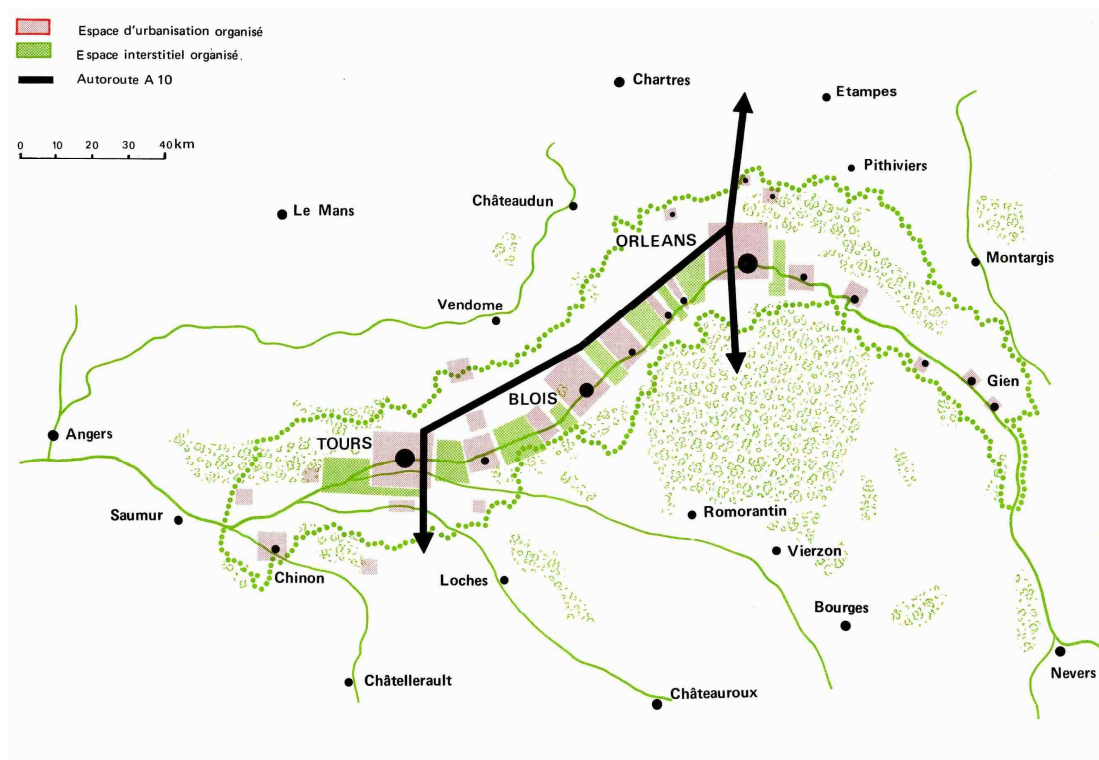


Illustration n.1 – Principles of the urbanisation following a linear discontinuous scheme¹⁰

The second study case concerns the UNESCO's inscription of **The Loire Valley between Chalonnes and Sully-sur-Loire** on the World Heritage List, as Cultural landscape, on November of the year 2000. The inscription is the final act of a long process, made by several partial (in space and/or aims) projects developed on, at least, two decades, which led to the patrimonialisation of the Loire river corridor along 260 km. At the same time it is also perceived as the threshold concretising a structural change is the system of action, where all the territorial institutions (at all the different levels) become equally legitimate actors.

The site is inscribed in the category of organically **evolved** landscape (resulting from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and that developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment), in the sub-category of **continuing** landscape, which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress¹¹. Waterways corridors in general seems to be a site of experimentation of spatial mechanisms, based on recovering and valorisation of historic accumulation of their occupation, after a period of abandoning, made possible by the extension of patrimony notions. Considering that inhabit cannot be resumed to the sole place of living, but has also to be enlarged to frequented space, either private or not, it become necessary to conceive new forms of spatial organization, taking into account sustainable development imperatives, increasing environment preoccupations, growing nature request expressed by citizens (disposing of

¹⁰ In: *Vers la métropole jardin* (1971), Livre Blanc, OREALM, juin 1971, carte 21, p. 122

¹¹ According to official UNESCO definition

rising spare time to dedicate to amusements and entertainments) as contributing factors. Along many waterways and rivers corridors still survive precious not built up spaces, preserved while often submitted to floods, which constitute actually a land reserve very close to towns. Those spaces, often combining high natural and cultural heritage quality, can awake specific interests within different planning actors, documents and instruments. Those spaces, preserved free of edification, appear today as possible sites for future projects, connected to sustainable development, patrimonialisation and economic growth (especially via the valorisation of the heritage targeting tourist market).

At the same time the expected impulse dynamics of the site overlap the ones of a “classical” UNESCO label operation: the increase of international visibility, of tourist frequentation, of civil society awareness... Moreover, the Loire valley site also constitutes the biggest site in France and is submitted to the recent UNESCO requirement of being provided of a management system.

To resume: concretized by the UNESCO inscription of 2000, within a certain global heritage “fever”, it aims to valorise local heritages as a resource for economic and territorial development. Promoting a reorganization of the system of action and actors it allows to observe eventual territorial re-compositions (on a non ordinary territorial cut-out base) and to observe ten years impacts.



Illustration n. 2 – The UNESCO perimeter (in dark green), and the river corridor (in light green)

Landplaning system and organization

The last forty years are marked by the end of the certainties and the emergence of social and environmental crises. The same spatial planning process involves some transformations which lead it to adapt to the new context while being one of the agents of the emergence of this context.

Project	Pilot System	Technical teams
The	DATAR: Délégation à l'Aménagement du	OREALM: Organisme d'Etude et

Garden Metropolis project (1968-1977)	Territoire et à l'Action Régionale. Directly depending from the Prime minister	d'Aménagement de la Loire Moyenne. A multidisciplinary team of civil servants and professionals: a urban planner, a sociologist, an engineer, a landscape architect, an economist, a geographer-aviator (in charge of the aerial images survey)
Loire river as world heritage (2000-...)	<p>Tree components:</p> <p>The territorial conference: orientation component. Chairmen the prefect of the region (state), with the participation of the presidents of the regions, the presidents of the departments, the mayors of the majors towns, the presidents of intermunicipalities, the presidents of urban areas, the presidents of some specific dispositive such as <i>Etablissement public Loire</i> and Natural regional park</p> <p>The development committee: proposition component in charge of actions and agreement in concert. It is open to all concerned actors, especially in the fields of economy, tourism, environment, heritage, culture and education</p>	The Mission Val de Loire : operational component. It's a <i>syndicat mixte interrégional</i> (interregional mixed union), chaired alternatively by one of the two concerned regions, composed by a union committee, made by regional elected representative and by an on-field structure made by professionals

The functioning transition was accompanied by a similar translation in French planning documents and instruments. From a very central and normative system composed by, at the specific local level: SDAU *Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement et Urbanisme* and POS *Plan d'Occupation des Sols*, we arrive to a more participative democracy and collaborating system made by: SCoT *Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale* and PLU *Plan Local d'Urbanisme*.

Which evidences the knowledge of these two different systems can bring to our hypothesis of a global relocation of the place of the project within the planning process? Especially if we consider that we had just taken into account the official system and not the individual, sometimes very powerful, contributions to it?

Project	Theoretical direction of the action in a simplified scheme	Complex direction of action
The Garden Metropolis project (1968-1977)	top down	top down, opposed by a down able to intervene on top - the example of the former mayor of Tours (1959-1995), at the same time deputy (1958-1973/1976-1997), and occasionally minister of commerce and handicrafts (1973) and later on minister of posts and telecommunication (1974), that qualified the garden metropolis of garden necropolis
Loire river as world heritage (2000-...)	grassroots	emerging from a down using the top and able to federate all local actors around a common project – the example of the former mayor of Chinon (1989-2006), mayor of Saint-Germain-sur-Vienne (1971-1989), deputy (1997-2001), senator of the department (since 2001), member of Edgar Pisani cabinet (1963-1965), <i>chargé de mission</i> at the presidency of the republic (1991-1995), inter-ministerial delegate <i>Town and social and urban development</i> (1988-1991), president of the inter-ministerial coordination mission for <i>Big architectural and urban operations</i> (1985-1988), director of the sector <i>Urbanism and landscapes</i> at the equipment ministry (1982-1985), president of the Natural regional park, special councillor for France at the UNESCO's world heritage centre, UNESCO focal point at the French Senate...

To resume we can explore the hypothesis that the transformations that affected the planning process are related to the passage from the simple to the complex. This formula has probably more the merit to concentrate in a few terms an evolution, even if it means being grotesque, than to represent faithfully an evolution, probably complex in any time. Much more certainly, any project, whatever its period and its context, presents dimensions of certainty and uncertainty, but at levels that can be differentiated according to the reference period.

The study of the transformations has to take into account the various possible types of project, while they probably do not affect all types in a similar way. A first typology considers three main factors: 1.

the milieu and its scales; 2. the domain (environment, mobility, urban design, etc.); 3. the level (utopia, conceptual, normative, strategic or operational project)¹².

Project	Level of the project	Declination
The Garden Metropolis project (1968-1977)	strategic	Regional planning scheme, further-on mandatory stated into local planning documents at the different scales
Loire river as world heritage (2000-...)	strategic or operational? system that help the action(s)?	<p>Voluntary adhesion to the project common frame: the signature of the engagement charter, federating the actors under the major common objective¹³ of “structuring a territorial project of sustainable valorisation, at the scale of the site, in an international perspective of economic, cultural and scientific exchange”¹⁴</p> <p>The operational component, aiming at federating wills and projects and to coordinate, animate and participate to the realisation and monitoring of the programmes of actions, has as core missions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The appropriation of the values of the inscription by the local populations; • The animation of actors and local authorities having a responsibility on the quality and the preservation of the inscribed Val de Loire

¹² A conceptual project does not aim at establishing a particular transformation but aims at exploring the fields of the possible. The strategic project, generally established at a territorial scale, tends to define a common horizon for a set of operational projects, often concerning a very detailed scale, some restricted parts of a space and a particular domain.

¹³ Being the ensemble of the aims: “to CONTRIBUTE to the valorisation of the Val de Loire site; to REINFORCE the attractiveness of the site, pointing out on quality, heritages preservation, social and economic territorial development, tourist reception; to USE the UNESCO label following the established rules; to COOPERATE with all the others institutional, public and private actors as to create a permanent exchange of information about valorisation activities; to TAKE PART in cooperation actions together with local institutions, especially along the world heritage list’s rivers; to DEVELOP programmes of actions, concrete and coordinated, of valorisation”. Charte d’engagement - Val de Loire – patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO, signed in Orleans, the 25th of November 2002, p. 5 (summary and translation by the authors)

¹⁴ Charte d’engagement - Val de Loire – patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO, signed in Orleans, the 25th of November 2002, p. 6 (translation by the authors)

		<p>site;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the organisations contributing to international radiance of the inscribed site, in particular the regions”¹⁵. <p>And, as core operational projects to sustain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the Loire castles • The river to river cooperation • The ‘Loire à vélo’ project • The Loire navy and ports • The landscape project • The <i>Rendez-vous</i> of world heritage • The world heritage vineyards”¹⁶
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We can also inquiry the relation between the whole and the parts. The first project is a global scheme, where the whole makes the parts; this global schemes guides the translation into operational through its mandatory inclusion in local and municipal planning documents. The second one cannot count on a formalised scheme, the project itself consist in the establishment of a frame, which means that the parts make the whole, which makes the parts. The whole, as an organised space, is an (intentionally?) emergence.

The same for the actions network. The first project could count on a pre-organised functioning: it was structured on diagnostic, solutions, different scales frames, interlocking of planning documents. The second one is an auto-organised one: each situation lead to the establishment of a proper solution and process, all planning documents, even at different scale, has equivalent importance.

Project	Results on the operational structure
The Garden Metropolis project (1968-1977)	Apparently simple , but due to absence of consultation of local actors by the centralized state level, failure of the project
Loire river as world heritage (2000-...)	Complex , at the point that anything and its contrary are permitted (within the framework of the project) but integrating all

¹⁵ Excerpt from the official web site : <http://www.valdeloire.org> (4 June 2010) - (translation by the authors)

¹⁶ *ibidem*

	the territorial actors as equivalent
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To expose our results we will employ the example of the analysis of the text of a selected number of municipal planning tools. As test sample we choose 7 municipalities along the river; within the Tours urban area; in different geographical, pedologic, geomorphologic and centre-periphery situation; along a gradient between urban and rural.

We wish to understand how the institutional actors in charge of planning mobilise the “world heritage project” as to achieve some specific wills composing with territorial sustainable development, protection and valorisation of heritages and landscapes, protection of population towards the floods risks, economic growth and agriculture decline.

The municipalities having their municipal territory totally inscribed in flood prone areas are:

La Riche and La ville aux Dames: urban, low presence of natural and built heritage, high urban pressure;

Berthenay, St-Genouph: rural, low presence of built heritage, some agriculture left, low urban pressure.

The municipalities between the low valley and the plateau are:

Luynes, St-Etienne-de-Chigny: at the limit of the urban area, high patrimonial identity and a low value image of the agriculture on the plateau;

Montlouis-sur-Loire: at the limit of the urban area, high patrimonial identity and important presence of cultural landscape, high value agriculture on the plateau (labelled vine production).

What we can observe is that all of them, according to their specific situation, make an instrumental use of the heritage discourse as to pursuit some common (and competitive) wills. Within the world heritage engagement, which constitute the common frame and the common project, we can pinpoint four different and contradictory positions (on only seven municipalities) using at the best the super local characteristics of the territory: once ceasing to urban pressure (through the sacrifice of an “ordinary” agriculture or through the prosecution of the officially forbidden buildings in flooding zones); once promoting a proximity “sustainable” agriculture; once protecting high quality agriculture also promoted as “natural” area; once valorising historic and landscape heritage for touristic purposes.

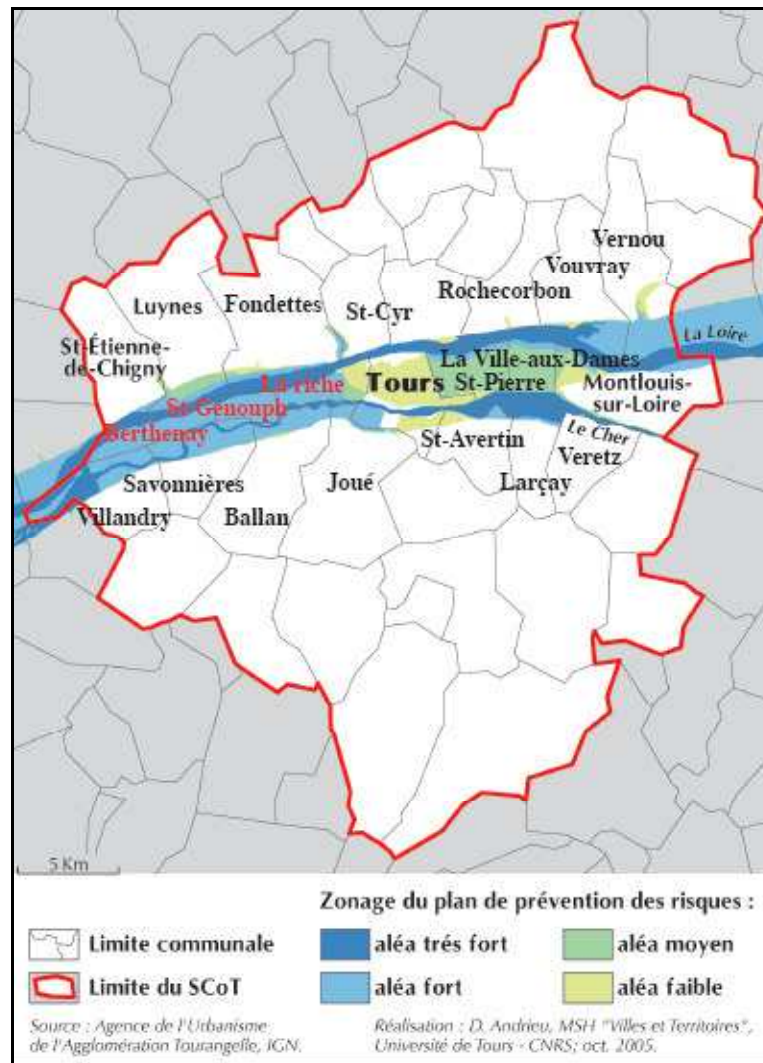


Illustration n. 3 – The Indre-et-Loire department, with the municipalities concerned by the UNESCO's inscription

Conclusions

The proposed communication reports on the first steps of a research which is trying to translate the evolution ongoing in the contemporary conception of urban and regional planning into an understandable narrative. Study cases are two examples of project or action which diachronic illustrates this evolution. The first one corresponds to the elaboration of a regional plan for the Loire valley (France) called Métropole-Jardin, established during the seventies, which, being certainly innovative, was nevertheless characterized by the domination of the expert activity, in a frame of very centralized state regime. The second corresponds to some projects actually developed after the inscription of a large portion of the Loire valley on the World Heritage list of UNESCO, in a period marked by the decentralization and the more or less actual application of the participation of all types of actors to territorial planning.

Since 1968 the Garden metropolis project proposed to lay out the river corridor between Tours and Orleans, passing through Blois, through the articulation and co-presence of natural and urban

dimensions of the site. It foresaw a real linear system, based upon a discontinuous urbanisation, regulated by green cuts. This articulation wanted on one hand to contain urban development and sprawl and, on the other, to identify a certain number of structural elements to take into consideration while planning, like heritages and landscapes. The project opened, since the seventies, to the taking into account of a series of nowadays unavoidable preoccupations.

If we only take into consideration the two analysed examples, almost applied on the same regional space, but conceived at two different and separated timeframes¹⁷, we could admit that they illustrate the call into question of planned action with the abandoning of the plan to the profit of more soft models. These models rely on negotiation, on actors' voluntary adhesion to project(s), on flexibility, etc. They are all based on local initiatives, communication, search for compromise, etc. That kind of re-questioning of plan correspond to the emergence of the "city by project" described by Boltanski and Thévenot (Boltanski L., Thévenot L., 1999), which is a way of acting marked by the flexibility, the capacity of adaptation, the transversality, etc. Even if its not popular anymore to defend the planned action, once the complexity encourage action models much more soft, the garden metropolis project still remain a very innovator project, that would have had a deepen and on a permanent basis influence in Centre region if it had been realised. We're not as sure that the action framework provided by the Loire valley UNESCO's world heritage owns the same valuable quality.

Finally, bigger concerns about planning problems, multiplication of actors, cooperation and coordination among actors, etc. hold today a very important place and become a result in itself at the same title that the very space transformation. The question of space organisation, at the same time what is organising and what is organised, push us to conclude that the river corridor of today is composed without a clear meta intentionality. Globally, reading different appreciations by each one, contradictory strategies of all, we can hardly find an integrating system. Any actor, even legitimate, is facing a complex and contradictory system, even if soft and multi answer one.

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¹⁷ One marked by a centralised territorial planning organisation, the other one decentralised, but partially based on the contractual negotiation between local institutional partners and the national state government

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